

Opinion Editorial

Emma Atchley, President, Idaho State Board of Education.

Idaho Needs Great Teachers

Effective teachers are essential to student achievement and success. Providing competitive, professional-level salaries is critical to recruiting, developing and keeping great teachers in the classroom.

The State Board of Education has forwarded a proposal to the 2015 legislature to implement a career ladder that will provide nearly \$200 million of additional funding for teacher salaries over the next five years. The career ladder would elevate teacher salaries to levels comparable to other states and to the private sector. More competitive, professional level salaries will help attract individuals to the profession and provide incentives for effective teachers to stay in the classroom.

Once fully implemented, the career ladder will provide a minimum salary of \$40,000 for new teachers and require robust and meaningful mentoring for those new teachers. Funding for veteran teachers will range from \$51,000 - \$58,000. Current funding tops out at \$47,000. Overall, funding for teachers will increase approximately \$8,000 to \$13,000 per teacher depending on where teachers fall on the ladder. Under the plan, teachers will also be compensated for attaining advanced degrees and may earn leadership bonuses based on assignments and needs within their local district.

The plan does include reasonable accountability measures intended to improve teacher effectiveness and support student achievement. Teacher effectiveness would be assessed through teacher evaluations and by student growth measures established at the local level.

While the proposed career ladder does set a minimum salary level and provides for varying levels of apportionment to districts, local districts would still have the ability to fund teacher salaries at rates higher than the state apportionment. However, the career ladder funding model will significantly increase funding to help reduce the gap for districts that must pay more than the state apportionment to be competitive and will ultimately provide more financial stability for all districts in the state.

The Board believes that the need is obvious and the time is right to take this critical step to improve Idaho's education system. We believe strongly in the need to increase funding for teacher pay and view this step as the best opportunity to make significant and sustained change.